

SOME
CONSIDERATIONS
ON
ORIGINAL SIN,
THE
FALL OF MAN,
AND THE
DOCTRINE OF A CHRIST,

Particularly recommended to the
ANTINOMIANS and METHODISTS:

BY
A
LOVER OF GENUINE CHRISTIANITY,
IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

L O N D O N :

Printed for the Author,

And sold by F. NEWBURY, in St. Paul's Church-Yard;
RICHARDSON and URQUHART, under the Exchange;
B. and C. DILLY, in the Poultry; H. GARDNER, in the
Strand; S. BLADON, in Paternoster-Row; and S. GARDNER,
in Gracechurch-Street.

MDCCLXX.

[Price SIX-PENCE.]

P R E F A C E.

THE Author of the following *Remarks*, thinks it not improper to inform his readers, that whatever *exception* or *censure* they may meet with from the Public, *he alone* is accountable ; having neither *consulted* or received the assistance of any person in writing it.

He is conscious that *bigots* of all denominations will condemn it: some others, who have never quitted the *leading-strings* of their *teachers*, or had a sentiment of their own, will probably censure him for exposing his thoughts to the world. Be it so :—they are welcome :—and he expects not to meet a better fate than those before him, who have departed

P R E F A C E.

departed from the common track in their writings.

As the elucidation of truth was his *sole motive* in writing, he wants no other praise or reward but that secret satisfaction, which ever accompanies honest endeavours to promote the happiness of mankind.

S O M E

CONSIDERATIONS

ORIGINAL SIN, &c.

DEAR SIR,

I Received yours of January 23, duly, in which you request my opinion concerning the "*Fall of Man, the Doctrine of a Christ, and the End for which he came into the world.*"

These are indeed important subjects, worthy the closest attention of the human mind, being matters in which we are very essentially concerned, and on the right knowledge of which our proper conduct in life materially depends.

As *your* opinions on these interesting points appear rather to have been founded on *tradition,*

B

tion, education, and popular notions, than to have arisen from a free and dispassionate investigation of the subject in its own nature; I must intreat you to lay aside all prejudice, and bring what I shall offer on this head to the impartial scrutiny of an unbiassed judgment. Let your own faculties be employed honestly in the search after and discovery of truth; and when you have once found it, let no man deprive you of it by artful sophistry, or empty declamation. A little knowledge of a man's own acquiring, is preferable to a load of learned lumber, collected from that chaos of opinions and traditions, of systematical divinity and metaphysical speculation, which have long perplexed mankind without yielding any profitable information.

In order to pave the way for the illustration of the subjects under consideration, I shall first beg leave to make a few brief remarks on the Deity, whose sacred name and attributes have been *asperged*, may I not say, *grossly propbanned* by vulgar notions respecting the *fall of man, his redemption by Jesus Christ, and the terms of future salvation.*

God is a being of uncircumscribed duration, and inherently possesses the *natural* attributes of *omnipotence, omnipresence, and necessary underived existence*, and is the first cause and author of all other beings that exist. These are his *natural* incommunicable attributes, without which he could not be God. Hence arise the more excellent

lent and amiable *moral attributes* of *justice, wisdom, holiness, mercy, goodness, and truth*, which he also possesses in their utmost possible perfection. It would be needless for me to attempt a proof of this definition of the Deity, because *you, as well as most other Christians*, allow it to be just, although *you, as well as many of those*, appear to have formed *erroneous conclusions* from these *self-evident principles*. *Self-evident* I call them, because to suppose the contrary would be a manifest absurdity.

Is it not strange, Sir, that in this enlightened age, and in opposition to principles so well founded, men should hold it as a fundamental article of their faith, that, "*the sin of our first parents in paradise should be imputed to all their descendants, and that all mankind are concluded under wrath, and the sentence of eternal death, on account of Adam's original transgression?*"

In order to reconcile this irreconcilable principle with the justice and mercy of God, they have framed another hypothesis, which reflects equal dishonour on those excellent attributes. After having represented him as acting the part of an unrelenting tyrant towards the human race, and at enmity with all mankind, for an offence committed prior to their existence, and which consequently they could not be in the least concerned in, or accountable for; they have supposed that nothing less than the *death of Christ*, the innocent immaculate Son of God,

could appease his vengeance, which he is represented as being delighted *with*, and as remitting, *on account of that great sacrifice*, the punishment due to fallen man. But that a God of the most perfect equity should afflict the *innocent* for the sins of the *guilty*, or place the righteousness of Christ to the credit of unrighteous man, is obviously irreconcilable with the nature and attributes of Him whose ways are equal. He who hath declared, that "*he will not visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children **," will not punish us for the transgressions of our first parents. He who hath also declared, "*that the rod of the wicked shall not lay on the back of the innocent,*" could not forfeit his veracity by such an act of injustice. He who hath declared, that "*the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him †,*" cannot, consistent with his wisdom, justice, and goodness, transfer the rewards and punishments due to each from one to the other. To suppose this, would be indeed to strip him of his most excellent moral attributes of justice, mercy, and goodness, and to represent him as an *arbitrary tyrant*, or *Asiatic monarch*, whose *mere will* was the rule of his actions.

God being infinitely happy in himself, prior to all creation, could have no motive to the creation of *man*, or any other species of intelligent

* Ezekiel xviii.

† Ibid.

ligent spirits, but pure unmixed benevolence. This benevolence excited him to create a *new species* of beings, to whom he communicated a degree of happiness adapted to their rank and station in the universe. But as it was impossible they should exist in a state of independency on *Him*, the source of all their felicity; he gave them a law, guarded with prohibitory sanctions; on the observance of which, their happiness, and more intimate union with *Him* (the *Father of spirits*) to all eternity depended.

Adam was thus created, and placed in a state of innocence, freedom, and happiness, wherein both he and his posterity might have eternally enjoyed sweet intercourse with *angelic spirits*, and an heavenly communion with their God in paradise. He was endued with *moral agency*, or a power of *choice* either to *obey* or *disobey* the divine command, and was plainly informed what would be the certain effects of his transgression: “*In the day that thou eatest of the tree of Knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt surely die.*” Or, in other words, “Thou shalt and must feel the effects of thy transgression, by becoming mortal, and thereby subject to the influence of those elements, over which thou now bearest rule and dominion. Thy organs of sensation will become gross by partaking that forbidden fruit, the medium of communication between thyself and *me*; the source of thy happiness will be thereby obstructed, and
thou

thou wilt be incapable of that refined enjoyment which thou now possessest."

But notwithstanding this awful *prohibition*, this clear *information*, Adam and Eve broke the law of their God by eating the forbidden fruit, and consequently fell from that state of innocence and perfection in which they were created; nevertheless their transgression was confined to themselves. Their future offspring could neither be accountable nor punishable for it, because they did not then exist. The law which Adam broke could not be a law to them; and where there is no law, there can be no transgression. They were not concerned in the original compact; and it being an absurdity to suppose, that one *free Being* can be *surety* for other free Beings; so Adam could be no surety for his offspring yet unborn, nor could his guilt possibly extend to any other than himself.

But you object, that, "*when Adam and Eve were fallen, they could produce no offspring but what were in their own likeness; that is to say, fallen also;*" and in support of this opinion, you ask me in the words of scripture, "*Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing?*" or, "*Can pure streams issue from an impure fountain?*" I answer, *No, certainly;* but nothing is hereby gained to your advantage, unless you will admit the absurd supposition of Adam's begetting the *souls*, as well as the *bodies* of his offspring. This, I think, is too irrational a supposition

supposition for you to admit, and yet on no other will your metaphors be of the least use to your argument. Adam gave being only to that *organized system of matter* called the *human fetus*, which, till actuated by the Deity with an intelligent soul, was a mere *animal nature*, and could not with propriety be termed a *man*. Thus mankind, in the proper acceptance of the term, could not be *streams* of that *impure fountain, Adam*; and therefore the metaphor being by no means just, the conclusion drawn from it is fallacious.

This *immaterial, thinking, intelligent something*, which we call the soul, appears to be a *spark* (if I may be allowed the expression) or *emanation* of the *divine essence*, as was *Adam's soul* when breathed into him by God himself, an indivisible principle of life, and is united to the *human form* by the Deity, when it is arrived at sufficient maturity for the exertion of its powers in *sensitive* and *moral* action. If then it be allowed (and to deny it would be a manifest absurdity) that the *rational soul* proceeds immediately from *God, the Father of all spirits*, then it follows, that at the moment of its union with the body, it comes out of the hands of its Creator *pure and perfect* in its kind, as *Adam's* was when it was breathed into him by God himself in paradise. Nothing that is immediately derived from a *pure and perfect Being*, can be *impure and imperfect* in its kind. If the
souls

souls of all the descendants of Adam are originally so pure and perfect till they, by *personal sin*, incur the divine displeasure, then how can the doctrine I am arguing against be supported, and how are *they* punished for *Adam's* guilt? Are they not rather punished for their own transgression? for "*all have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God.*"

Here perhaps you will ask me, "*If the descendants of Adam come all into the world thus pure and innocent, how comes it that they all follow him in the path of disobedience, and are all involved in his punishment?*"

I answer, That being indued with *free agency*, they *abuse* their liberty as *Adam* did *his* by the commission of evil, and are involved in a similar punishment to his, because *they* have followed *him* in personal disobedience.

You will then ask, "*Whether Adam's fall did not occasion a degeneracy in human nature; and why is there such an apparent propensity in children to evil, before they are capable of exercising their rational faculties?*" To this I answer, that the *vehicle* or *body* which we inherit from Adam, is without doubt fallen and degenerated from the *primitive* excellence of the *original body* in paradise; the *stream* in this case being like the fountain, the *fruit* like the *tree*. And as the structure and temperature of the sensitive organs (which in this state of being are a kind of *vestment* or *cloathing* to the soul) is greatly disordered

ordered by its degeneracy, so it is no doubt with me but that the *soul* is thereby greatly obstructed in its views, more closely *fettered to* and influenced by *corporeal objects*, and inclined to yield to the sollicitation of passions enkindled by numerous *external causes*; by which its attention is diverted from its only lasting good, and excited to an undue gratification of its terrestrial appetites, and neglect of the duties of its station; all which, in other words, is *sin*.

Thus far, and no farther, do I think the fall of Adam affected his posterity. For it is highly irrational to suppose that God would make an *innocent* and *pure spirit* the object of his wrath, (as is affirmed by you) for the transgression of its *first parent*, which it could neither prevent nor be a party in. *Virtue* and *vice* are eternally distinct, and the application of them *merely personal*.

They naturally produce their consequences, happiness or unhappiness, in whomsoever they are found, but are not *transferable* from one person to another in the sight of Him who judgeth righteously in the earth. *Sin* naturally incurs *punishment* in whomsoever commits it; or else *Justice* would be but a name. *Mercy* remits that punishment which *strict justice* calls for, when the sinner by repentance and amendment of life becomes the proper object of it.

But to impute the *virtue* or *vice* of one Being to other Beings, in which they are not inhe-

rent, or to *reward* and *punish* in consequence thereof, is contrary to *both* these attributes of the Deity.

Therefore, when Adam's *posterity* had by *personal* and *actual* transgression broke the divine command, *then*, and not till *then*, they became the proper objects of divine resentment, and obnoxious to just punishment. *Then*, and not till *then*, the Deity manifested the tokens of his displeasure to them, and graciously expostulated with them on the *justice* of their punishment.

This was strikingly exemplified in God's expostulation with Cain, on his complaining that his offering was not accepted. Mark the answer, for it conveys very important instruction. "*If thou hadst done well, thou (Cain) shouldst have been accepted; but sin, (thine own sin) or the consequence thereof, punishment lieth at thy door.*" Thou, Cain, art not rejected on account of thy father Adam's transgression; no, but solely on account of thy own. Thus it is with all mankind. God is unchangeable in his nature, and righteous in all his dispensations. We are not sinners by *inheritance*, neither are we the objects of punishment till we have *actually* sinned in our own persons.

It is from *these* and *other* reasons, (I doubt not) that the Quakers in particular have with great justice denied that the sin of Adam is *imputed* to his posterity. Their principles in this respect appear to me strictly consistent with
the

the reason and nature of things, and with every worthy idea we can form of Him who has formed all his intelligent creation to enjoy the blessed rewards of a glorious immortality, and celebrate his praise for ever.

In the next place, I am to consider your doctrine of a *Christ*, whom you maintain to be *equal* with God, nay the *very God*. You also say, that *Christ* has taken the sins of the whole world upon himself, and made an adequate satisfaction to the Father for all *their offences*; and by having in *their stead* fulfilled the divine law, in a life of perfect unfailing obedience, *his righteousness* is *imputed* to mankind, and has procured for them a reversion of that sentence under which they lay, and the reward of life eternal to all who *believe* in him. Or, in other words, That he was punished for our transgressions—that by *his* death and sufferings he made atonement for *us*; and that by virtue of *his* merits and righteousness *imputed to us* we can alone be saved—That *his* righteousness being complete in itself, what is called *good works* in us, are entirely unavailable to our future happiness. This is an alleviating remedy for a *wounded conscience*; but I fear it will be insufficient to heal it, or to stand the test in that awful day of discovery and decision, which is hastily approaching. I shall consider these in their order.

(112 D)
First, That Christ was not the *supreme Being* himself is evident from numerous texts of scripture, containing expressions dropt by himself when he was manifested in a body of flesh. See John v. 19, 22; ch. viii. 29; vide ch. iii. 5; vide ch. iv. 34; ch. vi. 28; ch. xiv. 31; Mat. xxviii. 18; and many others that do not now occur to my memory.

Secondly, To say that he could be a Being *equal* to the Father, is in other words to say, that there are *two* supreme Beings; which destroys the first principle in religion, viz. the unity of God, and is in itself highly absurd.

It is therefore evident to a demonstration, that as Christ could not be *God himself*, and as there can be no medium between an *uncreated* and a *created* Being, that Christ must have been the *latter*.

But although *created*, yet I think it not improbable to suppose him prior in point of duration, and superior in power and excellence to any other rank of intelligence whatsoever. We are told in the sacred text, that he was above all *principalities* and *powers*, thrones and dominions in the heavenly hierarchy; *one*, to whom the spirit of God was given without measure, and who was anointed of God an high-priest for ever, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

Christ was (if I may be allowed the expression) the *instrument* of the Deity in creating the world,

(18)
world, and of man ; and will, at the final con-
summation of terrestrial things, "*judge the world
in righteousness ;*" and then, as the apostle de-
clared, "*deliver up the kingdom to the Father,
and God shall be all in all.*"

If any should object or think I have set the
character of Christ in *too low* a light, I must
entreat such to consider that it cannot be exalted
higher, without breaking in upon the awful cha-
racter of the *one first cause* of all, which ought
always to be considered as infinitely beyond all
comparison and *equality*.

To blend the character of the *supreme God*
with that of any *other being*, or to suppose any
other Being *equal*, is blasphemy. For if it were
possible that there could be any *equality* between
God and any other Being, it would immediately
destroy his *supremacy*, and he would cease to be
God. The evident tendency of such a doctrine
is to introduce Polytheism and idolatry, by de-
stroying the unity of God, and *dividing* that
tribute of worship and adoration which is due to
him alone.

If any *other Being* could be equal to God,
then he cannot be the first cause of *all things*,
and *all Beings*, because there is not any Being
that can produce *another Being equal* to itself.
The *created* never can possess the same degree
of *perfection*, power, and excellence, as the *crea-
tor*, between *whom* and the most perfect *created
Being* there is doubtless an infinite distance in
the

the scale of existence ;—a distance, that the everlasting progression of all the innumerable gradations of existence, toward *absolute perfection*, shall never be able to fill up.

By the term *Christ*, I understand the *first-born* of all creation, the *Logos*, or *word*, or that universal *saving principle* of *light*, *intelligence*, and *divine life*, which God has implanted in the hearts of all mankind, to be their only *sufficient* teacher, leader, and instructor in the way of righteousness.

I also apprehend him to have been that *divine person*, (to speak after the manner of men) who called to Adam in paradise, who communicated the law to him with its solemn sanctions, and who, after he had broke this law, denounced the punishment due to his transgression.

It was doubtless this *divine person*, or *word*, made visible in a *celestial vehicle*, that appeared to *Moses* on mount Sinai, and spoke to him face to face ;—that marched before the people, and wrought all those miracles in the land of Egypt ;—that appeared to *Abraham* in the plains of *Mamre* ;—that was seen of *Jacob* at Bethel, and by many of the *prophets* in succeeding ages. But after the breach of that divine communion between God and man, of which he (*Christ*) was the alone medium ; *he*, in order to restore that communion, condescended, in the fulness of time, to become *visible*, in a *body of flesh*, subject to the infirmities of human nature,
in

in order to evince the *possibility* of a *perfect* obedience to the divine law. Therefore when mankind had, through a multitude of transgressions, gross idolatry, and profligate vice, so injured their *mental faculties*, so *debased* their *reason*, or buried it in *sensuality*, that it became *insufficient* to answer the prime end and purpose of their Being, then it pleased God to send *his Son* into the world, for the *help* and *restoration* of all those who believed in and *obeyed* him. In him was exhibited, in a *visible* and *local* manner, that *law*, *word*, or divine principle of *light* and *truth*, which had been measurably placed in mens hearts from the beginning. He became in that mode of existence (when his more excellent glory was veiled under the appearance of a man) such a perfect unfailing pattern of obedience and holiness to mankind, as never had been exhibited to the world. He did, *in his own person*, put an end to *sin*, and established the righteousness of an everlasting covenant, in order that by and through the influence of *his spirit*, that great and glorious end might be universally obtained in the earth.

I likewise believe and readily grant, that it is only by and through the influence and assistance of *Him* as a *principle* in the hearts of men, that they can work out their own salvation, and inherit the kingdom of God. In this sense it may be truly said (by a figure of speech)

speech) that Christ is the *Saviour* of *men*; that he is "*the way, the truth, and the life*;"—the *door* into the sheepfold; and that "*no man cometh to the Father but by and through him*;" that is, by and through the assistance of his spirit, as an active principle in their hearts, which wherever it is submitted to, leads into all truth, and to the fountain of truth and happiness.

The sufferings of Christ in the garden, and on the cross, when "*Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabac-thani*" was his mournful language, were merely the sufferings of his humanity, and not of his divinity. They were doubtless necessary from his union with that *vehicle of flesh*, and intended to evince to mankind the possibility of a soul's sustaining (when influenced by him as a principle of life and strength) the most aggravated weight of human calamity, without sinking under it. It likewise sets forth the efficiency of his power, on all those who rely thereon, to bear and overcome that punishment and temptation, which the Almighty, in the course of his providence, might permit to attend them for their greater refinement from all impurity. This is evident, and generally acknowledged. For notwithstanding the *sufferings* and *death* of Christ, or even his *all-perfect righteousness*, who-soever continues in the practice of *sin*, without *personal repentance*, and *amendment of life*, can have

have no rational claim to the mercy of God. So that *his* sufferings and death can have no effect on *obstinate impenitent* sinners, who are *crucifying him afresh* in their hearts, instead of laying hold on him as a means appointed of God for reconciliation with himself. Nor can they receive any advantage from that great sacrifice, till they return to *him*, by forsaking their sins, and complying with those unchangeable terms of salvation, which ever did and ever will render men the proper objects of the mercy of God in a future state.

Christ in the flesh manifested an example of *perfect* obedience to the sacred law of God, which is the same throughout all ages of the world. He came not to publish a *new gospel*, but to *republish* that which was from the beginning: Not to call the *righteous* (those who had *obeyed* the law written in their hearts) but *sinners* (those who had *disobeyed* or neglected that law) to repentance and amendment of life. He *was*, and still *is*, a *teacher*, a *guide*, and *example* to men, and as a principle in the human mind is leading and guiding those who *receive* and *obey* him, into all truth.—He is unto them the “*power of God unto salvation* ;”—the procuring cause of that salvation, which they thro’ his assistance are capable of inheriting by a life of obedience and virtue; and the alone *medium* through which men can approach the Father, and gain an admittance into the celestial kingdom of rest and peace.

What will be the *final lot* of those who reject his teachings in their hearts, and *die in their sins*, is not my present business to examine. I think it may safely be concluded, that *in that state* they cannot enter the kingdom of God. But if we consider divers prophetic expressions in the New Testament, where it is said, that "*in the end of all things, he (Christ) should deliver up the kingdom to his Father, and Death and Hell should be no more, but God should be all in all;*" is there not some room to hope that the great end of the coming, to wit, the salvation of *all intelligent spirits*, will be effected in some *future period* of eternity?

This is an event which every good man must wish may take place; an event, in the anticipation of which Virtue triumphs, and a secret fervent glow of delight overspreads the mind of man.

The supposition is not impossible, it is not improbable, nay, is it not most consistent with the best ideas we can form of a God perfect in wisdom and goodness; who hath declared, that he willeth not the everlasting destruction of his creatures, and whose tender mercies are over all his works?

I remain with sincerity,

Yours, &c.



F I N I S.